

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 SANTO DOMINGO 001697

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA AND DRL
NSC FOR SHANNON AND MADISON
LABOR FOR ILAB
TREASURY FOR OASIA-LAMONICA
USDOC FOR 4322/ITA/MAC/WH/CARIBBEAN BASIN DIVISION
USDOC FOR 3134/ITA/USFCS/RD/WH
DHS FOR CIS-CARLOS ITURREGUI

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV DR](#)

SUBJECT: DOMINICAN ELECTION #27: CAMPAIGNING, LOGISTICS AND
A VIGIL FOR LEONEL'S VP CANDIDATE

REF: A. (A) SANTO DOMINGO 1518
[B](#). (B) STATE 52515 (NOTAL)
[C](#). (C) SANTO DOMINGO 1319

[1](#). (SBU) This is no. 27 in our series on the Dominican
presidential election:

ELECTION CAMPAIGNING, LOGISTICS AND A VIGIL FOR LEONEL'S VP
CANDIDATE

After Rafael "Fello" Subervi accepted President Mejia's offer
of the vice presidential slot (Ref A), the ruling PRD mounted
a rally of thousands with both candidates March 7 to
celebrate the birthday of late PRD leader Jose Francisco Pena
Gomez (our SIPRNET site carries Mejia's tub-thumper of a
rally speech). Subervi told second-ranked daily HOY, "The
PRD is 95 percent united" and can count on its 1.7 million
members to carry Mejia/Subervi to victory. He acknowledged
he had "discussed" government jobs for his supporters with
party president Vicente Sanchez Baret before accepting the
second slot on the ticket. Mejia accused chief adversary and
former president Leonel Fernandez (PLD) of "treason" for his
March 2 statements in Washington warning of an impending
electoral fraud (Ref B).

Reacting to this and other PRD smear tactics (Ref C), church
and civic organizations and the Central Election Board (JCE)
have been advocating a higher level of campaign discourse.
USAID-funded NGO "Participacion Ciudadana" (Citizens'
Participation) on March 9 proposed in leading newspapers a
16-point code of ethics for the election campaign, advocating
"an atmosphere conducive to debate and discussion of
programs, ideas and themes important to the nation, without
attacks or personal diatribes."

Mejia's camp expressed mild interest in holding televised
presidential candidate debates -- unprecedented here -- but
PLD Secretary General Reinaldo Pared Perez sneered at the
idea. The PLD SecGen said the President "doesn't meet the
necessary conditions for a debate" since he is below 20
percent in the polls and PLD candidate and former president
Leonel Fernandez is above 60. Fernandez instead on March 8
began running nightly on prime time television a
docu-advertisement of "conversations with constituents."
PRSC candidate Eduardo Estrella -- as far down in the polls
as Mejia -- has shown no interest in a debate, but in recent
days appeared at a civic forum on corruption, where he
promised tighter economic austerity and tough anti-corruption
measures. None of the candidates has published an election
platform.

Traditional caravans and marches are accelerating, and the
first violence occurred March 7 in an incident that left four
injured. Campaign directors met March 8 and agreed to
exchange itineraries for street rallies, so as to avoid
partisan confrontations. The three contenders and two minor
party candidates planned an intense campaign schedule March
13-14 in the provinces and the capital. President Mejia
plans to hit Barahona in the impoverished southwest for the
inauguration of more public works.

Counting, Registering and Preparing

- - - - -

Central Election Board (JCE) judges and technical directors
on March 4 held a public briefing for diplomats, journalists,
and political party representatives on logistics and data
processing arrangements. The event afforded detailed
information on the election preparations, but did not allay
the opposition's distrust of the JCE as a Mejia-packed court.
The briefers reported a total of 5,020,703 eligible
registered voters, of whom 52,440 will vote in overseas
locations in the United States, Canada, Spain, and Venezuela
(a first for the Dominican Republic). Voters will cast
ballots at 12,102 "colegios electorales" (polling tables) at

home and abroad; handwritten tallies will be scanned into the computer system at 134 municipal election boards and overseas sites and transmitted by dedicated telephone lines to the JCE computer center in Santo Domingo. The JCE said it was adhering to its published timetable and had recruited and begun training 82 percent of the needed 66,561 volunteer poll workers.

USAID-funded NGO Participacion Ciudadana (Citizen Participation) gave a lunch for diplomats and the press March 3 to outline its plans for 6,000 Dominican election observers and to offer an independent assessment of the election arrangements. The Monitoring Commission of notables chaired by Mons. Agripino Nunez conferred with "Mini-Dublin-Group" diplomats (including poloff) March 2 to exchange views and concerns, from defects in voter rolls to security shortfalls in the JCE's computer system. A committee of information systems advisers to the JCE on March 10 delivered a report critical of computer security and recommended an outside audit; a copy quickly leaked to the press. JCE president Luis Arias replied that the computer and voter list problems were well known to the JCE's experts and were being resolved. The JCE earlier had announced that polling places will be open April 17-18, well in advance of the election, for voters to verify that their registrations are correct.

Nerves

- - - - -

Civil society, business, and the opposition continue to call for maximum vigilance by national and international observers, to safeguard against rumored abuses in support of the President's re-election bid. Some contacts ask us, "Why is the United States less supportive of election observers than in previous elections?" This comes mainly from Fernandez's PLD, the National Council of Private Enterprise (CONEP), and other business groups. We have taken every opportunity to correct this misperception, for example in a private briefing for the American Chamber of Commerce board March 5. PLD leaders and members of Participacion Ciudadana told the press on March 11 of their concern that international monitoring might be inadequate. They exhorted the JCE to get additional qualified international groups involved. JCE Administrative Chamber presiding judge Nelson Gomez, at the March 4 briefing and in a subsequent TV interview, urged international observers -- including diplomats -- to begin their activities as soon as possible.

Inexorable Movement of Preparations

- - - - -

The JCE announced it would distribute RD \$412.8 million (US \$8.4 million) in public campaign financing to the registered political parties March 28, of which RD \$304 million (US \$6.2) would go to the three big parties. The JCE approved additional political party alliances (small hangers-on casting their lot with Mejia or Fernandez) and resolved disputes within two small parties, invalidating their proposed alliances with the ruling PRD. Army Major General Elvio Guerrero Reyes, recently named to head the Electoral Police to provide polling site security before and on election day, announced that the JCE from March 25 to 31 would train Armed Forces and National Police officers for this duty. The Electoral Police will have a total contingent of 35,000 military and police personnel.

The VP sweepstakes

- - - - -

This weekend's cliffhanger is Leonel's choice of a vice presidential candidate, scheduled to go public before the March 17 deadline for registering candidates. Pundits have happily been pouring out names of possible running mates, including business leaders as well as politicians. The other PLD chieftains Danilo Medina (PLD candidate in 2000) and Jaime David Fernandez (VP in 1996-2000) Jaime David Fernandez Mirabal seem unlikely choices. Medina has been more effective as a behind-the-scenes organizer than in public, and Jaime David probably is biding his time for a future presidential bid. Party organs will meet Sunday to recommend a candidate, but the final choice will be up to Leonel.

12. (U) Drafted by Bain Cowell.

13. (U) This report and others in our election series are available on the Department's SIPRNET at <http://www.state.sgov/p/wha/santodomingo/> along with other current material.

KUBISKE